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## AN ENGLISH EXPERIMENT IN EDUCATION

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When one meets a reference to the advice given to Tom Brown by his father, on the boy's going away to school, he is inclined to consider the purely incidental place given by the latter to what is ordinarily considered to be the chief work of school as exceptional and due to the father's lack of acquaintance with schools. In a recent interview with the headmaster of one of the great public schools, I was impressed by his unconscious corroboration of the position of Mr. Brown. We were discussing the influence of some other types of English schools upon education on the Continent and I had ventured to suggest that the difficulty and, in some cases, impossibility of access to classrooms in the public schools rendered inoperative an influence which might otherwise be of great value. His reply was that men come from various countries to these schools in order to find out how character is formed in them, "and how are they to learn anything about that by visiting the exercises in the classrooms?"

In general I have found in the various countries I have visited that the more classic the subject-matter and the more formal the method, the less accessible is the work to the visitor; and I may well add that, except as an opportunity for psychological observation, the less instructive is it when seen. To state the matter positively, the more the work has reference to real needs, is in some sense vocational, and so subject to reconstruction and reasonable experimentation, the readier are all concerned to have it seen. The common excuse of school authorities, in Italy and England alike, is that the boys are so shy that a visitor disturbs them. Even in the same school in which this holds for the older subjects, one finds that the shyness disappears in a laboratory, a workshop, or a lesson in military geography. If the exercise has any other hold upon the boys than that of formal discipline and general culture, there is a degree of participation, on their part,

which enables the group to be social enough to include the observer without disturbance.

There are in England a number of schools which, to a greater or less extent, have endeavored to work upon experimental lines. When I use this term, "experimental," I mean nothing revolutionary or capricious, but a recognition of the principle of reconstruction in education. Among those which I have visited are Dr. Reddie's Abbotsholme, Mr. Badley's Bedales, and Dr. Findlay's two schools of observation in connection with the University at Manchester. It is my purpose here to report briefly some impressions of another school which differs from those just mentioned, among other things, in that it is definitely a government school. I refer to the Royal Naval College at Osborne, Isle of Wight, where boys begin upon their course of preparation for the navy. They are there for two years, from the age of thirteen to fifteen; then follow two years at Dartmouth, and two terms in an instructional cruiser, after which they are ready to go to sea as midshipmen.

In England the lower classes, even when kept in school until the common subjects are worn out and higher branches must be taught, are still in "higher elementary schools," so these lads, having been born into the ranks of the "better class," belong to the secondary-school type. A son of the Prince of Wales is among the number. They are said to be "practical" boys, rather than "students," though I was assured by an instructor that those who are of the latter class do fully as well in the practical studies as do the others.

It will be a long time, probably, before original research will recognize in such schools as this excellent opportunities for important investigation. Conditions are so different from those ordinarily found that much light ought to be shed by such studies upon a number of our problems; for instance, the opportunity for grading early upon a basis of ability, the holding together of a group throughout the course, the very few who are removed and the absence of accessions after the beginning of the course. Another topic, which would have bearing upon our need of experience with reference to that form of social co-operation

which we now call supervision, could be studied here in the division of labor that is made between the subject-teachers and the men from the navy, who have charge of gymnastics, engineering, and the home life. Each group of boys has a tutor who serves as general advisor and director of work throughout the two years. One of his duties is to attempt to meet the needs of the boys early in their course with reference to instruction on sex matters and personal hygiene.

There is a system of interchange of teachers between Osborne and the higher school by which the relations of the two institutions are rendered much more intelligent. Perhaps nothing is more interesting here than the high place given to intelligence—to judgment. One usually finds the army, and even more, the navy, brought into most of our discussions of discipline in schools, and it is generally assumed that in these institutions is found support for unquestioning and even unthinking obedience; another assumption is that obedience in the years of manhood is only possible if the boy has been trained by the practice of the habit of obedience, and that only as he becomes older can he be allowed to question. The advocate of these points of view will be shocked to learn that in this school the first object is to develop self-respect and a spirit of inquiry. The standard of obedience differs in the three divisions of which this school is the first, and becomes more exacting with age and the increase of intellectual appreciation. The outcome is a young man who does what he is told, but is able to think as well as to obey. It is said that the spirit of inquiry is very strong in the boys, that their attitude is on the whole skeptical. The atmosphere of the classrooms was certainly refreshing, compared to some of those I had seen in which the pupils were passive to a disciplinary training which had very little to do with their real selves.

The boys have comparatively little time for independent preparation; although one feels less the danger of too much teaching, more common in Europe than in America, where there is so much opportunity for participation in the class exercises, I was interested to learn that the higher school finds that the students are very strong from the standpoint of intelligent memory,

but are not equally able in the independent use of books. The problem of the due proportion of oral instruction and the use of text- and reference-books ought to be simplified by studies in this school. The laboratory notebooks were of more value than any made by older students I have chanced to find in Europe, yet there was not the devotion to fussy detail and fine appearance sometimes found in American schools.

Following is a statement from the announcement of the college as to programme and curriculum:

The year contains 3 terms of 13 weeks; and 3 leaves of 4, 3, and 6 weeks at Christmas, Easter, and Summer respectively.

The hours of study on week-days are as follows: 7:15 A. M. to 7:45 A. M. (winter); 7:00 A. M. to 7:45 A. M. (summer); 9:00 A. M. to 10:00 P. M., with a break of 15 minutes at 11:15 A. M.; 4:15 P. M. to 6:30 P. M. (winter); 2:15 P. M. to 4:30 P. M. (summer).

Wednesday and Saturday are half-holidays. There is preparation from 7:45 P. M. to 8:15 P. M. every evening except Saturday and Sunday; on Wednesday preparation is from 7:30 P. M. to 8:15 P. M.

On Sunday there is a Scripture lesson in the morning; and a period in the evening is assigned to reading, in class, English books just one stage above what the cadet would read by himself.

The period of study is 45 minutes; this is reduced to 30 minutes before breakfast (except in summer); and in evening preparation (except on Wednesdays). Two consecutive periods are taken for laboratory; and two or, more generally, three consecutive periods for engineering.

These hours of study would probably be found too heavy but for the large amount of manual instruction given. Thus, it is possible to intersperse seamanship, Swedish drill, engineering, and practical physics between ordinary class lessons. In this way the strain on the boy's attention is relieved, and an unusually large amount of work can be done without undue fatigue of any one faculty.

The division of time (per week) among different subjects in the first year is as follows: Mathematics, 9 periods of teaching and 1 of preparation; physics, 3 periods of teaching and 2 of laboratory, with 1 period of preparation in alternate weeks; French, 6 periods of teaching and 1 of preparation; history, 3 periods of teaching and 1 of preparation; English, 3 periods of teaching (including the reading-lesson of Sundays) and 1 period of preparation in alternate weeks; religious instruction, 2 periods, of which one is on Sundays; geography, 2 periods of teaching, with 1 period of preparation in alternate weeks; gymnastics and drill, 3 periods; seamanship, 2 periods, of which one is for signalling; engineering, 15 periods (nominal; some time is

lost in going to and from the workshops, shifting, etc.) ; with 1 period of preparation in alternate weeks.

In the second year the division of time is much the same, except that one period more is given to physics and one less to English.

This can be roughly summed up as : engineering, 15 ; mathematics and physics, 15 ; drill and seamanship, 5 ; language, history, etc., 20.

The engineering is easily the major subject, and evidently the other work bends to its demands. What is done in drawing, bench, lathe, forge, and other departments would surprise many teachers of older students. There is time enough given to it so that the boy makes real progress in the various shops and is able to connect the work of one with another in a manner not possible under our usual programmes. I wish that a careful study might be made of the effect of the heavy physical work upon boys of this age. That they enjoy what they are doing is evidenced by the hundreds of them who fill up the shops at free hours.

The physical condition of the pupils is good. The army and navy, after long investigation and experiment, both have adopted the Swedish drill as the basis of training. There is a recognition of the facts of growth on the physical side ; for instance, the boys sleep in beds and no longer in hammocks, as it is felt that during the growing years the latter method offers hindrance to proper development. Such an advance as this gives one hope that in time we may come to the point where our relations to children in industry also may be more positive and helpful.

I shall not attempt to discuss the work in language, literature, history, etc. The English work is a much more important factor in this school than it is commonly in England. The useless is eliminated, but it is felt that the useful cannot be learned sufficiently in an incidental manner. The period on Sunday evening is given to books in English read aloud. The material selected is, as stated above, a grade of maturity in advance of that which the boys would naturally read to themselves.

The mathematics course is of especial interest. The facts that all the pupils have a definite vocation in mind, that examinations play a part only in so far as they function with reference to actual needs, and that the headmaster, Mr. Godfrey, had

already in one of the public schools been known as an advanced worker in the subject, have combined to produce some interesting experiments. Mr. Garstang, of the Bedales school, is at work on the same lines. The latter is the author of the section on mathematics in that interesting book, *The Public School from Within*. I am inclined to think that in no other secondary subject has the best practice in England so much to offer us as in this department. The general line of advance is in accord with what Professors Moore, Meade, and others have been advocating in the pages of the *School Review*. Instead of long-drawn-out drill upon the plane of arithmetical methods and processes, there is an early advance to algebraic and higher systems of notation. Students at the age when we are keeping them on the interminable intricacies of commercial arithmetic are there making the acquaintance of the higher mathematics and are using the material in practical problems. I am convinced that we underrate the ability of our students to do advanced work. I do not believe that we need to sacrifice accuracy in fundamental arithmetical processes to the extent that is done in some cases. It is unjust to a pupil to permit him to be obliged to think out the product of  $7 \times 8$  when he is in his teens, but we can eliminate the non-serviceable and make it possible for a student at the close of a secondary course to have gotten some insight into the higher fields and not be helpless before a simple problem of statistics or engineering, merely because he does not know the language in which its solution requires statement.

I had heard much praise of Osborne from progressive men in various parts of England and was very glad to have an invitation to visit the school. What I saw and heard there seemed to me fully to justify all that had been said to me. The excellent relations between the naval officer in charge and the headmaster who directs studies promise much for the future development of this new school, for it has been in operation only a few years. Among the schools visited this year, this school with Bedales in England and Dr. Kerschensteiner's *Fortbildungsschulen* in Munich, with some of the schools in Frankfort a. M. in Germany, have offered the most suggestion with reference to needs in America.